

**LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1. (Currently amended) A clamp for ~~[[connecting]]~~ encompassing a stepped segment where a first end of a flexible tubing or pipe overlaps ~~[[to]]~~ a second end of a pipe, comprising:

a clamping band configured to mate over ~~[[a]]~~ the stepped segment ~~where said first end overlaps said second end;~~

opposite-lying flange segments extending substantially radially outward from said clamping band; and

means for preventing tension from spreading said clamping band, said spreading prevention means being disposed in a region proximate at least one of said opposite-lying flange segments, wherein said clamping band has two free ends defining a gap between said two free ends, said gap being saddled by a sliding crosspiece that slides under said two free ends, said sliding cross piece saddles said gap, wherein said sliding crosspiece has a thickness of 0.2 mm to 0.3 mm and is made of a high-strength material and molds to the stepped segment under the effect of a tightening pressure imparted by said spreading prevention means so that said sliding crosspiece compensates for difference in tolerances between the first and second ends at said gap.

Claim 2. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said region is an angle defined between said clamping band and said opposite-lying flange segments.

Claim 3. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said spreading prevention means has at least one rib.

Claim 4. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 3, wherein said rib is a molded bead disposed at said region.

Claim 5. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 3, wherein said rib is an angle sheet iron.

Claim 6. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 3, wherein said rib is arranged on an outer edge of said clamping band.

Claim 7. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 3, wherein said rib is secured to said clamping band by a weld.

Claim 8. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 2, wherein said spreading prevention means is a welded region for securing said opposite-lying flange segments to said clamping band.

Claim 9. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said spreading prevention means is a rotation lock for tightening said clamping band on said first and second ends.

Claim 10. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said opposite-lying flange segments have reinforcing plates.

Claim 11. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a bolt having a polygon portion formed on said bolt, said polygon portion being accommodated by a correspondingly formed hole in said opposite-lying flange segments in a manner that prevents rotation of said bolt.

Claim 12. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 11, further comprising a nut for attachment to said bolt, said nut having an undercut for accommodating a region of said polygon portion.

Claim 13. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said spreading prevention means is disposed on said opposite-lying flange segments.

Claim 14. (Cancelled)

Claim 15. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said sliding crosspiece is essentially square.

Claim 16. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said sliding crosspiece has a stepped impression.

Claim 17. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 16, wherein said stepped impression, prior to assembly, extends only over a part of a perimeter of said sliding crosspiece, and wherein said sliding crosspiece, prior to assembly, is essentially flat along a remaining part of said perimeter.

Claims 18-19. (Cancelled)

Claim 20. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said sliding crosspiece is made of a deformable material.

Claim 21. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a sealing element arranged between said opposite-lying flange segments.

Claim 22. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 21, wherein said sealing element is strip-shaped.

Claim 23. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 21, wherein said sealing element has a round cross section.

Claim 24. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 21, wherein said sealing element is made of a material that is resistant to high temperature.

Claim 25. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 23, wherein said sealing element is made of glass fiber.

Claim 26. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, further comprising a saddle covering a clamping gap of said first and second ends defined between said opposite-lying flange segments and a means for preventing leakage at intersecting edges of said saddle and said clamping band.

Claim 27. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 26, wherein said means for preventing leakage is constructed as a labyrinth seal.

Claim 28. (Cancelled)

Claim 29. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 26, wherein said means for preventing leakage is a plastically or elastically deformable sealing material arranged along said intersecting edges.

Claim 30. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 1, wherein said first and second ends have a butt-jointed transition having a continuously encircling ring arranged at said butt-jointed transition.

Claim 31. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 30, wherein said continuously encircling ring is a bead impressed into said clamping band.

Claim 32. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 30, wherein said continuously encircling ring is made of plastic or elastomeric material.

Claim 33. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 26, further comprising a plastic or highly elastic sealing material is employed on said intersecting edges.

Claim 34. (Currently amended) A clamp for [[connecting]] encompassing a segment where a first end of a pipe [[to]] overlaps a second end of a pipe, comprising:

a clamping band having a stepped arrangement so that [[the]] said clamping band is configured to mate over [[a]] the segment ~~where said first end overlaps said second end~~, said clamping band has two free ends defining a gap between said two free ends;

opposite-lying flange segments extending substantially radially outward from said clamping band;

means for preventing tension from spreading said clamping band, said spreading prevention means being disposed in a region proximate at least one of said opposite-lying flange segments; and

a sliding crosspiece that saddles said gap and slides under said two free ends, wherein said sliding crosspiece has a thickness of 0.2 mm to 0.3 mm and is made of a high-strength material.

Claim 35. (Previously presented) A clamp for ~~[[connecting]]~~ encompassing a segment where a first end of a pipe ~~[[to]]~~ overlaps a second end of a pipe, comprising:

a clamping band configured to mate over ~~[[a]]~~ the segment ~~where said first end overlaps said second end~~, said clamping band having two free ends defining a gap between said two free ends;

opposite-lying flange segments extending substantially radially outward from said two free ends;

a sliding crosspiece saddling said gap and having edges that slides under said two free ends, said sliding crosspiece having a stepped impression that, prior to assembly, extends only over a part of a perimeter of said sliding crosspiece, and wherein said sliding crosspiece, prior to assembly, is essentially flat along a remaining part of said perimeter; and

a seal arrangement positioned between said edges of said sliding crosspiece and an edge of an associated impression in said clamping band.

Claim 36. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 35, wherein said seal comprises a labyrinth seal arrangement.

Claim 37. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 35, wherein said seal comprises a bead seal.

Claim 38. (Previously presented) The clamp in accordance with claim 35, further comprising means for preventing tension from spreading said clamping band, said spreading prevention means being disposed in a region proximate at least one of said opposite-lying flange segments.

Claim 39. (Cancelled).